

**State Board of Education
Summary of Transformation Discussion with Vermont Educators
November 20, 2007**

Members of the State Board of Education met the morning of Tuesday, November 20th with educators from around the state to continue the public engagement process regarding the future of education in Vermont. This discussion was kicked off by the release of *The Future of Education in Vermont*, an education transformation discussion document recently adopted by the State Board of Education. Facilitated by Department of Education staff members, educators were split into three groups to respond to three questions:

- As you envision a transformed learning environment for the students of Vermont what current practices should be included in a transformed education system that would best serve the needs of all students?
- As you envision a transformed learning environment for the students of Vermont what new practices should be included?
- What questions does the document, A Step toward the Transformation of Education in Vermont, raise for you as an educator? A principal?

Educators mentioned several *current* practices they felt should be included in a transformed education system.

- community service learning
- alternative programs that give students more choice and ownership over their education experience
- technical education
- hands-on learning, applied learning
- GEs, essential skills
- small class sizes
- programs targeted at “at risk” students
- teacher advisory system for students
- Math, Science, Literacy networks for teachers
- collaborative teacher work groups; professional learning communities
- Responsive Classroom initiative

Educators also discussed what *new* practices they would like to see in a transformed education system.

- individualized learning plans for all students
- teacher mentorship/relationship for each child at all grade levels
- multiple pathways for student learning based on student interest with high expectations for student performance (particularly for struggling students)
- meaningful service learning opportunities for students
- redefine senior year; should not look like other grades
- new learning model: teachers working together with a small group of students on project-based learning, multi-disciplinary learning, together for longer blocks of time
- more consistent technology infrastructure

- “digital divide” a problem in schools; teachers need tech support but also professional development in how to use technology
- more time for professional development; professional development that spans districts
- support for new teachers: collaboration, team approach
- teacher education: emphasis on integration not a narrowly defined curriculum
- removal of Carnegie units

Educators also discussed their general reactions to the document, A Step toward the Transformation of Education in Vermont, and questions it raised for them.

- Students who participate in traditional, peripheral programs often have to make sacrifices. Post-secondary education requires students to stay ‘in the box.’
- Educators are constrained by ‘the box.’ The box includes the ways teachers are paid, the number of students in a classroom, students in certain subjects for a certain amount of time.
- School boards are constrained by the laws and regulations imposed by the state.
- How do we build a child’s sense of responsibility to their community: environmentally, teaching tolerance, dealing with conflict, learning from conflict?
- How will we ensure that the Transformation will not be perceived as “just another thing”? How can we demonstrate the relevance and necessity of the proposed changes?
- What is it that changes teacher behavior in the classroom?
- How do we make this transformation affordable?

Much of the time on the next few State Board monthly meeting agendas will be dedicated to similar conversations between State Board members and representatives of various constituent groups. Future meetings will include superintendents, school board members, legislators and other political leaders, representatives of the business community and other constituent groups. In past meetings, the State Board has heard from students and parents. The public is encouraged to participate in the process—the desired state document can be viewed and comments can be made at http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/future_of_education.html.